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Butter and Eggs

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U.S. Department of Agriculture

A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. John Baker, Office of Information, broadcast Thursday, June 1, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home program, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 104 associate radio stations.

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JOHN BAKER:

And it's the good old summer time sure enough. Every day for nearly a week now the sun's shone and the mercury's climbed to the 90s or above, but here's Ruth Van Deman still looking as cool as a cucumber----Is it a cotton dress again, Ruth.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

Certainly. But my dress is not news. You should have seen the one First Lady wore last night, at the party she and the President gave for the press. And Mrs. Wallace was wearing cotton too---black organdy with pink flowers, and a skirt yards and yards wide at the bottom.

BAKER:

And what was Mrs. Roosevelt's dress?

VAN DEMAN:

It was an evening gown too of course---unbleached cotton, hand blocked in a very entertaining design of galloping horses around the bottom of the full circular skirt. The figures were blocked on in shades of tobacco brown and gold--- and the bodice was dyed a soft gold color. There was a little jacket too, but I think she took that off when she danced the Virginia reel.

BAKER:

Very unusual costume I'd think.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, very striking. And probably it was the first time that a First Lady ever wore a cotton dress at the request of the Secretary of Agriculture. But of course cotton has to be in the fashion spotlight along with wool.

BAKER:

That's right. Mrs. Roosevelt and Queen Elizabeth are slated to wear wool when they meet next week. Maybe there'll be a change in the weather.

VAN DEMAN:

We hope. Anyway it's very thin wool.

BAKER:

We'll count on you, Ruth, for a fashion note on the wool dresses next week. And now are you all set for another of the reports on foods officially declared in surplus?

(over)

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, sir. Here are my references on butter and eggs. I'll put them right down here on the table. The milk bulletin first --- "Milk for the Family". It has a section on butter. And the egg leaflet: "Eggs at Any Meal".

BAKER:

You look very pleased ---

VAN DEMAN:

Certainly I'm pleased. Nothing makes a cook happier than to know there are plenty of butter and eggs in prospect.

BAKER:

This surplus is more than in prospect. There are big supplies of butter and eggs on the market now --- or in storage waiting to come out just fast as the market will absorb them. Prices on both butter and eggs are very favorable to the consumer.

VAN DEMAN:

It seems to me the price of butter's lower than for some years.

BAKER:

Yes, the wholesale price of butter now is the lowest it's been in five years.

The reason is the large supply. Since the first of the year --- or rather for the first four months of the year --- over 500 million pounds of butter have come from the creameries of these United States. And the hens have laid millions of dozens of eggs. We don't have the exact count ---

VAN DEMAN:

Never mind. I can't visualize millions of dozens of eggs anyway. My mind's eye doesn't go much beyond a pound of butter and a dozen eggs keeping cool in the refrigerator ---.

BAKER:

Well covered, I hope.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, well covered. Nice housekeeping, John. Apparently you don't like butter and eggs flavored with onions or your favorite cheese.

BAKER:

Well now maybe my favorite cheese needs protection from the butter and eggs.

VAN DEMAN:

Maybe. Anyway, I think you'll find a neat diagram in the milk bulletin, showing that it's best to keep the butter, and milk, and cream in the coldest spot in the refrigerator---preferably not over 45 degrees.

BAKER:

The eggs belong there too?

VAN DEMAN:

No, the next coldest spot will do for them. They don't need to be quite so cold as the butter and milk. But they do need to be covered. It's amazing how quickly strong odors will go through an eggshell. And air circulating over eggs constantly will dry some of the moisture out of them---increase the size of the air cell.

But, John, there are two or three things about butter I'd like to ask you.

BAKER:

I'll do my best.

VAN DEMAN:

Every day in your "swing around the markets" you give prices for 92 score butter? Who does the scoring?

BAKER:

State and Federal butter graders. Creameries that want the service can have it if they pay for it. The butter is scored for quality---flavor---and various other points. And if it scores 92 or more, it can be marked with a certificate of quality---carrying the name of the United States Department of Agriculture.

VAN DEMAN:

That explains something I've seen on the paper wrapper around the butter.

BAKER:

Yes, that's where the certificate of quality would be. Or on a slip inside the carton. I understand that last year 85 million pounds of butter carried the certificate of quality.

VAN DEMAN:

This grading, then is entirely separate from the standard for butter set up by Congress in 1923.

BAKER:

Entirely. The butter grading and scoring has to do with quality. The definition of butter by Congress is to protect the public against adulteration---that is on butter that enters interstate commerce.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, of course, State laws take care of what's made and sold within their own boundaries.

BAKER:

According to the Federal law, butter is butter only when it's 80 percent or more milk fat.



VAN DELIAN:

That's where the calories come in. Because of the 80 percent fat a pound of butter has an energy value of over 3000 calories.

BAKER:

But they're calories plus other things.

VAN DELIAN:

Oh yes. Plus vitamins A and D if the cows are fed properly.

I saw a very interesting exhibit the other day on vitamin A in butter, out at the Beltsville National Research Center. There were four samples of butter made from the milk of cows on four different kinds of feed---green pasture---alfalfa hay---timothy hay, with and without carrots. The color of the butter ranged all the way from deep gold to almost white.

BAKER:

My guess is the green pasture and the deep yellow butter went together. At least that's the way it was down on the farm in the "good old days".

VAN DELIAN:

Yes, the butter got deeper in color as soon as the cows went out to pasture in the spring. But what we didn't know in the "good old days" was that the deep yellow butter had more vitamin A in it---was actually better for us.

BAKER:

No, I suspect we just liked it because we could see it --- yellow and buttery --- even when it melted into a slice of fresh bread from the warm loaf just out of the oven.

VAN DELIAN:

The heel of the loaf --- that was always my piece.--- But ah me, I'm afraid we're straying from the path of science.

BAKER:

No, I don't think we are. Don't nutrition scientists put butter on the list of foods for well-nourished children?

VAN DELIAN:

Yes, butter or some fat rich in Vitamin A --- May be I should have brought along a copy of the new folder on "Well-nourished Children" to put on the table here, beside the milk bulletin and the egg leaflet.

BAKER:

Yes, they'd make three good companions. And don't you know, Ruth, you should never come up here without a complete set of Bureau of Home Economics bulletins under your arm?

VAN DELIAN:

This is a warm day --- I travel light on a warm day. --- And I'm a little disturbed that we haven't been able to give more attention to the honorable egg this time.

BAKER:

I think there'll be a chance again soon. These surplus foods aren't going to be used up in a day. And your egg leaflet here --- "Eggs at Any Meal" is available, isn't it?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, it's still free.

BAKER:

Well, as I remember it has some very good suggestions for cooking eggs --- in ways that are just a little out of the ordinary.

VAN DEMAN:

There's one I like to use particularly when butter and eggs both are plentiful. It's called eggs benedict - named after the chef who invented it, I suppose.

It's poached eggs on toast or toasted muffins, with a thin slice of ham or bacon between the egg and the toast. And over all is a sauce - hollandaise sauce - made with egg yolks and butter and lemon juice.

BAKER:

Sounds like very good eating.

VAN DEMAN:

It is --- a grand dish for a summer day.

BAKER:

Thanks for the suggestion. And now while you are taking leave of us, Ruth. I'll repeat the titles of these bulletins you've laid on the table.

Milk for the family.

Eggs at Any Meal.

Both of these bulletins, free if you send a card to the Bureau of Home Economics in Washington, D. C.

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